

## Warm Me to My Core

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# Warm Me to My Core

by [EmpressCirque](#)

## Summary

Soap and Ghost have made it out of Las Almas alive, but Soap is still in the fight. Bleeding and cold, his body is already shutting down. Ghost decides to do something about it and is forced to confront his feelings along the way.

Or...

Soap and Ghost have to share body heat. Simon realizes he might love Johnny.

## Notes

Trigger Warnings: Hypothermia Symptoms, Gunshot Wounds, Stitching

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

John's freezing - that's the first thing Ghost realizes when the adrenaline of getting out of Las Almas with both of them alive starts to wear off. The Scot is shivering, teeth clacking together so sharply that Ghost is worried they'll break. It'd been such a relief to just make it to a bloody vehicle that Simon had completely disregarded the fact that Johnny's injured and his clothes are soaked through. The man should be dead.

They'll have to pull off long enough for Ghost to get the bullet out of his arm soon, but he's not taking any chances. Not stopping until the lights of the city vanish from the rear view mirror and he's positive they haven't been followed. Soap's no good in a fight now and Simon isn't sure he'll be able to protect them both if it comes down to it.

"Johnny, give me a sit-rep," he orders because he needs to get the man's head back in the game. Needs to get him focused on something other than his wet clothes. "Talk to me, Soap."

"F- fine. Am... am f-fine," the younger man trips over his words. Almost like he's choking on them - like when he tries to speak he's drowning on the water sitting on his skin. "C- cold is... is all."

Ghost reaches to turn the heat up, stops himself, knows if he rushes this process Johnny's likely to go into shock, or worse. Fuck. He looks back to his companion, watches as his head slumps forward and shoots back up. Like he's caught himself falling asleep, but Simon knows this isn't sleep that's threatening to take Soap away. He's seen men in the throes of hypothermia before. Watched some men succumb to it even. It's never pretty, almost as painful to watch as it is to go through. It's a slow and unpleasant death.

"Eyes open, Sergeant," another order, more forceful. Simon tries not to think about the way his stomach twists at the thought that if Johnny closes his eyes, he's not going to open them again. "How does the moon cut its hair?"

This stupid game still - keep Johnny calm. Keep him focused on anything that isn't dying. Keep him alive. *Alivealivealive*. The word starts to sound like gibberish in his own mind. He's said it too many times tonight and it's starting to lose all meaning. Almost like he's placed a curse on it and now Soap is paying the price. He should be used to this by now - he walks and Death follows, taking any life that Simon Riley dares to gaze fondly upon. His hands grip onto the steering wheel tighter, his breath shakes, and he just wishes that the

Scot would respond to his fucking joke.

“Ah... ah did- didnae ken the... the moon had h- hair.” Soap mumbles. Sounds like he’s lost in another world, locking himself away where Ghost cannot follow. The Brit briefly notes that wherever it is that Soap is destined to go, he surely will never get to himself, and selfish as he is, he’s not ready for this to be his last moments with the man. “Ma he- heid’s loupin,’ Lt..”

“Come on, Johnny, take a guess,” he says, trying to focus on the road in front of him. Trying not to think about how hard his heart is beating while he also tries not to think about Johnny coding in the seat next to him. Soap doesn’t answer though, just let’s his head thud against the glass and murmurs some Scottish bullshit Ghost can’t understand. The heat isn’t helping - he knows it won’t. “How... how does the moon cut its hair?”

Johnny ignores him, reaches for the fucking heater dial instead. Ghost slams on the breaks and grabs him. Holds his wrist so tight that he knows he’s leaving bruises. Can’t even begin to understand why the sight had scared the piss out of him. They aren’t medics, but they both have been trained for situations like this and watching Soap ignore it in favor of trying to get warm? It’s frightening because he’s watching the man’s own brain work against him. It’s asking him to commit suicide and it doesn’t even know.

“Johnny, look at me,” he says, trying to ignore the way the man’s eyes have widened with fear. He’s never seen Soap look at him that way - it feels like someone has stabbed him in the chest. Other than Price, there aren’t many people who still see Simon beneath the mask. If he was smart, he’d let that remain, let Johnny see Ghost for nothing more than a monster, but he doesn’t want that. *Simon* doesn’t want that. “Johnny... It’s me, right? It’s Ghost. I won’t hurt you - you’re safe, but you can’t warm up too fast.”

He loosens his grip, as if that will prove his point. As if he hadn’t nearly broken the poor man’s wrist in panic. Against all reasoning, it works. Soap’s gaze softens, “Simon?”

Ghost could almost laugh, something like relief washing over him when that look comes back into his sergeant’s eyes: warm, comfortable. A look that he isn’t used to but wants to keep all to himself because it’s *nice*. Instead he nods, pushes down that feeling and tries to trap it, lock it away because he’s only *really* known Johnny for a week and he’s already letting himself get attached. He’s

letting himself focus on how much he doesn't want to lose Johnny instead of the fact that Johnny most certainly doesn't want to die.

"I told you, I like you alive," he replies, slowly returning his focus back to the road ahead. He waits a breath, just to make sure Soap doesn't try anything again. The man doesn't, but he's shivering once more. His lips are turning blue, his (beautiful) skin is so pale, and his veins almost shine on the surface. He even *looks* like he's in pain. "Fuck. Okay."

He doesn't have time to keep moving - the drive is at least another few hours and the cold, combined with the bullet wound, means Johnny isn't going to last that long if he doesn't do something now. The decision is eerily easy for him, like it takes no thought at all. A part of him, deep inside, screams about the dangers of stopping now, but he isn't going to watch Johnny make it through a war-zone unarmed just to watch him die on the street like a dog.

That isn't what he deserves, not someone as good as Johnny.

They pull over and as soon as he puts the truck into park, he's trying to gather the man closer to him. *Not Johnny - please.* That's all he can think. He'd rather face down the Shadows alone then watch Soap die in his arms, but it seems like whatever fucking God there is might only be getting the first half of the memo.

Gloves come first, he removes Johnny's and then his own without hesitation; their fingers intertwine, but it isn't enough. After a few moments, where Johnny makes no acknowledgment of their close proximity (something he most certainly would do if he was fully conscious), he decides *fuck it* and pushes the mask upwards. The fabric rests just above his nose and he brings their hands close. He breathes - tries to release all of the warmth in his body and let Johnny take - *taketaketake*. He's used to people taking; it's something everyone has always done, but not Johnny. Johnny never takes and he wants so badly to change that because unlike everyone else, Johnny *deserves* to take.

"Johnny, do you trust me?" And really he knows he's asking the Scot if he knows just how much Simon trusts *him*. He isn't sure how in less than a week the man has scaled over every wall he has ever built and found a place inside his (cold) heart. The sun to his moon - a dying sun, threatening to scorch the universe around it with its absence. It's a wound that he wouldn't survive and that terrifies him, the sudden realization that Simon Riley is still fighting to stay alive beneath the

Ghost. How can one person so easily resurrect the dead? “I’m going to help you get warm, but I need you to trust me, yeah?”

“J- just gonna... close m- my eyes,” Johnny mutters, whatever focus that was left in his eyes vanishing as his head slumps forward again. Simon curses and moves - fast. He starts by tugging and unbuckling his own vest, stopping only momentarily to check if he brought his fucking hand warmers - he did, thank fucking God. Johnny is next. He pauses only long enough to search the truck for something to cover themselves, anything that might add to Soap’s much needed warmth. He’s starting to think whatever it is above is trying to drive him back to religion because he finds a blanket tucked under their seats. It’s filthy and covered with dirt, but it might be the most gorgeous thing Simon has ever seen.

“Eyes up, Johnny. On me,” he says just because he can. His shirt comes first, then his boots, socks, pants. He strips himself of his clothing, entirely of Ghost, and carefully helps Johnny do the same. It aches somewhere deep in his chest when the man *whines* and begs for him to let him sleep, but he just tries to mutter shitty reassurances that he’s going to help him. He’s going to keep him warm. He’s going to give whatever it is Johnny needs from him if it means he’ll live.

Once they’re both down to their skivvies, he gathers Johnny impossibly close, wrapping the blanket tightly around them and just holding the man like he’ll slip away. His hand warmers rest on the seat next to him, the blanket boxing the heat in and making the cold touch of the sergeant’s skin almost unbearable. *This has to be enough*, he begs; this has to be enough to keep his Johnny safe and alive because Death cannot take something else. Again, more to himself because he’s still not sure how aware Johnny is of what’s happening, he mutters, “There we go. You’re doing good, Johnny. So good, but you just need to stay awake for me.”

It’s been a long time since he’s been this consumed with worry. Being powerless is something Simon Riley has long since forgotten, a wound reopened by Graves. He should be the one bleeding and cold, but a part of him thinks the man knew exactly what buttons to push to make Ghost vulnerable. He hit him in the one spot that would make him hesitate, the one person that Ghost is starting to realize he’d risk his life for all over again. Isn’t that a terrifying thought?

And now, he’s alone with those thoughts. No silly Scot to distract him from the fact that he’d hauled himself up in an active war-zone to ensure the safety of a man he shouldn’t even consider his friend. He

wants to think he would have stayed behind for anyone else, but he can't be sure. Maybe, but most certainly not as long as he had for Johnny. Definitely wouldn't have indulged them like Soap - making jokes, praising him, and hell, if he's being honest, flirting with the man. But there's something about Johnny that is so different than everyone else - something about him that looks at Ghost and makes him feel whole.

He should hate that, but...

He wraps his arms tighter around the sergeant and buries his face into the crook of his neck. Breathing is easier than thinking right now - in. Out. Warmth to skin - his life to Johnny. *Take it, he thinks, take it because it's yours. Just survive; don't leave me too.*

They sit there for so long that Simon starts to lose track of time - his body is so tired, the crash is coming and he knows they need to get back on the road soon. He cannot remember the last good sleep he had though and as Johnny's body slowly begins to heat up, the contact feels... nice. Natural. It feels like he belongs in this moment, with Johnny. Tonight has taken so much - a breaking point. Johnny is on the verge of shattering, but Simon hopes that he's been quick enough to hold the pieces together.

His eyes start to close, but he fights back the feeling. It isn't fair to rest, not when he's still not sure if Shadows might somehow track them down; Johnny is still in the fight and falling asleep is like abandoning the man.

"You with me, Johnny?"

The man hums an affirmative and as tired as his body feels in Simon's arms, he still presses against his flesh like he's trying to burrow his way into him. He wonders how the man would respond if he knew that Simon would let him. It's so easy to oblige, so easy to want this.

"Did you finally want to try and answer my question?" Simon asks, tracing his fingers along Johnny's knuckles. The man nods, but he knows he's still too tired to respond. So instead he slides his hand to the Scots fingers, taking each one and squeezing them gently within his hand. One by one, until he starts to feel the life return to them. "Eclipse it."

He's not expecting a response, so he isn't exactly disappointed when Johnny doesn't insult his terrible taste in jokes. He misses the man's voice though, misses his cocky attitude and not understanding half of

the bullshite out of his mouth. He wonders if Johnny would teach him Scots if he asked - if they could have their own secret banter within the 141. One that Gaz and Price wouldn't be able to understand. Something that was only for them and no one else.

At some point, he takes Johnny's hand again and starts tracing the man's fingers along the myriad of tattoos the decorate his own arm. He whispers the story of each one in his ear, not caring if the man is really listening, but just wanting him to know. Wanting him to somehow understand that he's willing to give parts of himself over with time. He can give himself to Johnny, but he just needs time to learn how. It's all too intimate, but right now, that doesn't matter.

When he's positive that Johnny's body is at least comfortably warm, he finally relents and turns the dial for the heat up just a bit more. The shivering has stopped, thank fuck, and Johnny's starting to move around in his lap more. His arm will need tending to soon and Simon carefully reaches to inspect the damage while the man begins to fight through the fog of pain and exhaustion. It's bad, but if he's honest, it could be much worse. He's thankful to see that the bullet isn't buried in the muscle like he had first thought - a small blessing because he's not positive that digging it out wouldn't overstimulate the man into shock, regardless of if he's now warmer.

He'll need to patch it though. It's still irritated - most definitely on the verge of infection. Simon gathers up their vests and digs through their supplies - thankfully, between them both, they have enough for a patch up. Not what Johnny needs, but they can sort through doing a proper job once they reach the safe-house.

"Simon?"

"I'm going to patch you up, soldier. Just need you to stay awake a little longer, yeah?" Simon runs his hands through Johnny's hair, brushing the disorderly strands back into place. "It'll hurt, but once I'm done, I promise you can rest."

Johnny nods, "Trust you."

A warmth spreads in his chest at that.

He sets to work; cleaning the wound proves to be the worst part. Patching anyone up on the field is never *fun* - even the strongest men are reduced to ruined messes when the injury is bad enough. Johnny is no exception. The man screams and thrashes in his hold, begs. *Simon, please. Simon, stop. It hurts, it hurts, stop, yer hurting me.* And



Simon wants to listen, wants to hold the man and pray for forgiveness because hurting his sergeant is something he would never do. Not by choice and yet, here he is.

The process is slow. Not helped by the fact that he cannot get the shaking of his hands under control. This should be the easy part - the part that Simon can detach himself from because he isn't the one sitting through a makeshift stitching. Yet, somehow this is worse; almost as bad as not knowing if Johnny would ever make it to the church. Not knowing if somewhere, Soap was bleeding on the streets of Las Almas, waiting for Ghost to save him. How long would both of them wait before giving up hope?

When he ties off the last stitch, Johnny collapses against him again; his chest heaving and he's choking out wet sobs. Simon continues to hold him, trying to wrap the blanket tighter around them both as if he can chase off anything in the world that might want to harm them. He breaths again, mutters into Johnny's hair for him to do the same. In. Out. Hold. In. Out. Hold. It takes too long, so much time that the ache in Ghost's heart feels endless, but Soap manages to push through. He calms. He breaths.

"Simon?"

"Yeah, Johnny?"

He's going to need to confront what has that's happened in the past few hours when everything is said and done. The attachment he's formed to the Scot is... unusual. Or at least, it should be. It should be something that has Ghost adding extra walls, that has him casting the man aside and doing everything he can to forget the way warmth spreads through his body whenever the man directs his attention in towards Simon. It's been a long time since he's felt... wanted. Needed even. And it's been even longer since he's let those emotions creep out from under the mask.

"I knew ye were a big ol' softie beneath that crabbit exterior," there's something bordering on a laugh in John's voice. He sounds impossibly tired, but hearing him speak in coherent sentences is something Ghost is going to take as a blessing. "Knew ye liked me."

Simon hums, "Yeah? Well, no one would believe you if you told them anyhow."

"Not that I like sharin'," and Johnny smiles, burrowing himself closer to Simon again, arms wrapped gentle around his sides and squeezing,

“It’ll be our little secret, aye, Lt.?”

But Simon isn’t sure that it’s a secret at all; he had seen the way Grave’s had glanced between them before he pulled the trigger. It would have made more sense for him to take aim at the Lieutenant - to let his Shadows handle Soap. Yet, that is not what he had done. Instead, in the split seconds before disaster, Phillip Graves had looked at him and saw something Ghost hadn’t. The very thing he never would have expected - that John MacTavish had the power to resurrect the dead. Impossibly, he had brought Simon Riley back to life.

“Aye,” he doesn’t even try to mimic Soap’s impossibly thick accent. Instead, he’s too focused on how exactly he’s going to get his hands on Graves and make him pay. “Now get some rest, Johnny. And don’t go dying on me.”

Soap doesn’t answer, just snores and Ghost almost smiles. He’ll rest himself, just for a few moments, before getting dressed and finishing their long drive; for now though, he feels right. Locked in Johnny’s arms, feeling his gentle heartbeat against his chest, and sharing the same air. It’s warm and Simon decides his heart might not be as cold as he once thought.

## End Notes

This is for t0mmy-apologist on Tumblr, who basically pointed out that Soap should be freezing cold by the end of Alone.

Considering he trudges through the rain and a flooded tunnel, I'm very much inclined to agree. This ended up turning into me just forcing Ghost to accept the fact that he likes Johnny, both as a friend and romantically. Not the most romantic thing to write between the boys, but I had fun and I hope you enjoyed!

Longer fake dating fic (also inspired by t0mmy-apologist) is coming soon!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!